



YOUTH
ECO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP

PROJECT NO. 2023-2-PL01-KA220-YOU-000178470

WP2/A1/T2 ITALIAN NATIONAL REPORT

MVNGO

OCTOBER 2024

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INTRODUCTION

This national research report presents the findings of a literature review and an online survey conducted as part of the **YEE-HUB project**, aimed at exploring the attitudes of young entrepreneurs towards ecological practices. The first task of this project focuses on gathering insights into how ecological awareness shapes the actions of young business owners, particularly in relation to their roles as entrepreneurs, consumers, family members, and community participants. Furthermore, the study seeks to understand the knowledge, awareness, and perceptions of ecology within these groups.

The diagnosis was carried out in two key stages. Step one involved a detailed analysis of existing research on the attitudes of entrepreneurs—especially millennials and Generation Z—towards ecology. This review provided a foundation for identifying trends and gaps in pro-ecological behaviours among young business leaders.

Step two involved conducting an online survey to collect primary data on the ecological attitudes of young entrepreneurs born between 1990 and 2004. The survey assessed the consistency of their pro-environmental behaviours across different life roles, as well as the key factors enabling or hindering the adoption of sustainable business practices.

The research was conducted across five partner countries: Poland, Turkey, Germany, Italy, and Spain. This report refers specifically to the research conducted in Italy.

This report consolidates the results of both steps, offering valuable conclusions and recommendations for promoting ecological behaviours among the youngest generation of entrepreneurs. The insights gained will contribute to the selection of character criteria for the ideal eco-entrepreneur.

LITERATURE RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY

The field research methodology for this project involved a comprehensive analysis of eight studies or reports on the pro-ecological behaviour of entrepreneurs in the respective country. These reports, published between 2004 and 2024, were reviewed with a focus on correlating national data with broader European and global trends.

The literature review was guided by several key aspects:

- Entrepreneurs' behaviours in the ecological context

- Factors positively or negatively influencing pro-ecological behaviour
- Pro-ecological behaviours as customers and citizens
- The level of knowledge and awareness about the impact of business on the natural environment
- Challenges faced by companies in implementing pro-ecological activities
- Market and legal conditions affecting the adoption of sustainable practices
- Examples of successful pro-ecological activities that led to financial benefits
- Other relevant insights and findings

This approach allowed for a thorough understanding of the current state of pro-ecological entrepreneurship and the identification of key factors supporting or hindering sustainable business practices.

RESULTS

The desk research conducted by MVNGO staff presents key insights on the behaviors, influences, challenges, and market conditions that shape Italy's entrepreneurial landscape in the ecological context, based on various sources examining pro-ecological entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial Behavior in Ecological Context

Italian entrepreneurs show a growing commitment to sustainable practices, motivated by consumer demand, economic benefits, and societal pressures. Key sectors like green technology, circular economy, and eco-innovation are focal points, with businesses adapting to the global sustainability movement. For instance, initiatives like Contamination Labs foster interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange that inspire eco-friendly innovations in smart technology, bio-economy, and cultural industries.

Influencing Factors for Pro-Ecological Behavior

Positive Influences:

- **Market Demand & Consumer Pressure:** The shift toward eco-friendly products, especially among younger generations, encourages sustainable business practices.

- **Collaborative Ecosystems:** Partnerships across public, private, and educational sectors provide vital support and inspiration for pro-ecological initiatives
- **Government Initiatives:** Policies like Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) and alignment with the EU Green Deal reinforce the sustainability agenda.

Negative Influences:

- **High Initial Costs & Financial Constraints:** Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often struggle with the upfront costs of green technologies, limiting adoption.
- **Regulatory Complexity:** Entrepreneurs face bureaucratic hurdles, inconsistent regulations, and fluctuating environmental policies, which can hinder long-term sustainability investments.

Behavior of Customers and Citizens in Pro-Ecological Context

Consumers in Italy, particularly Gen Z and millennials, increasingly prioritize sustainability in their purchasing decisions. Many are willing to pay more for eco-friendly products and expect companies to offer transparency about their environmental practices. Initiatives like "Eco-Generation" reflect a broader trend of youth engagement, aiming to instill pro-ecological values among students through hands-on activities like beach cleanups and sustainability training.

Knowledge and Awareness of Environmental Impact

Italian businesses are becoming more aware of their environmental footprint, influenced by global sustainability goals such as the UN's 2030 Agenda. Despite this, there are knowledge gaps, especially in implementing sustainable practices effectively, which many entrepreneurs seek to bridge through education and training.

Challenges in Implementing Pro-Ecological Activities

- **Economic and Market Pressures:** Rising energy consumption and limited renewable energy availability create challenges for companies attempting to reduce emissions and reliance on fossil fuels.

- **Lack of Green Infrastructure and Support:** SMEs particularly face a scarcity of sustainable infrastructure and financial incentives, impeding broader green adoption.

Market and Legal Conditions Affecting Pro-Ecological Activities

Market demand for eco-friendly products continues to rise, reinforcing the need for sustainable practices. However, legal complexities and inadequate incentives remain barriers. Businesses seek simplified regulatory frameworks and more robust financial support to ease their transition to greener models. The EU Green Deal and other regional policies are pivotal in shaping these efforts, though more localized support could enhance progress.

Good Practices and Examples of Financially Beneficial Pro-Ecological Activities

Some Italian companies, like Enel Green Power and Caviro Extra SpA, have successfully integrated sustainable practices, achieving both financial gains and environmental benefits. These organizations employ circular economy practices, green technologies, and strategic alliances to increase profitability and market competitiveness. Their successes exemplify how eco-innovation can align with business growth, especially in sectors like renewable energy and sustainable materials.

Conclusion

Italy's pro-ecological entrepreneurial landscape is characterized by increased awareness and efforts toward sustainable practices, though challenges like high initial costs, regulatory burdens, and limited financial support remain. Market demand and collaborative ecosystems are driving factors, and further support from government policies and financial incentives could enhance Italy's transition to a green economy.

ONLINE SURVEY

METHODOLOGY

The environmental attitude survey was conducted among young entrepreneurs born between 1990 and 2004. This anonymous survey was designed to gather insights into their attitudes toward climate change, its impact and the ecological actions undertaken.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections:

1. Respondent Profile
2. Business Data
3. Personal Shopping Preferences
4. Citizenship Behaviour
5. Knowledge & Learning Preferences

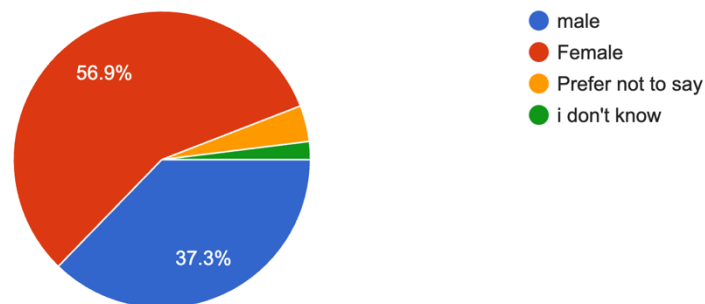
The survey consisted of 35 open and closed questions, providing both qualitative and quantitative data on the respondents' environmental attitudes and behaviours of young people.

The online survey in ITALY was conducted between September and October 2024, with a total of 51 participants. The data collected were analysed collectively.

RESULTS

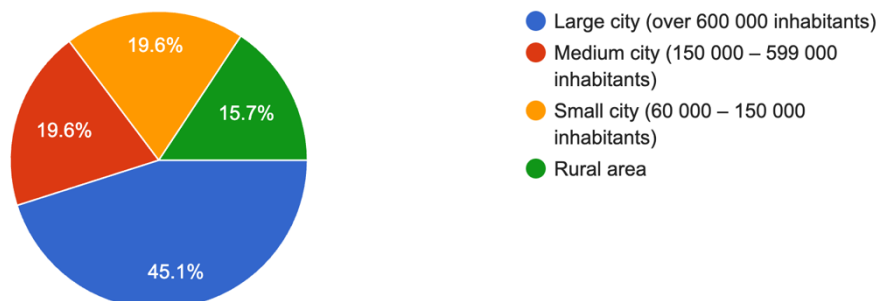
A. RESPONDENT PROFILE

Gender
51 responses



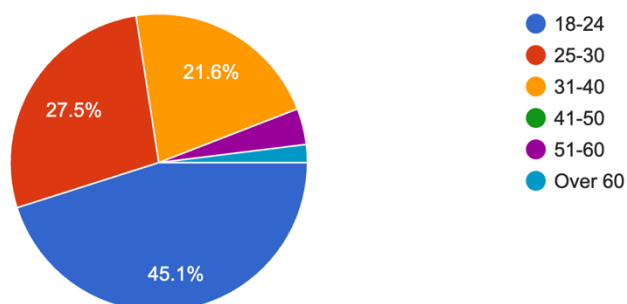
Place of residence

51 responses



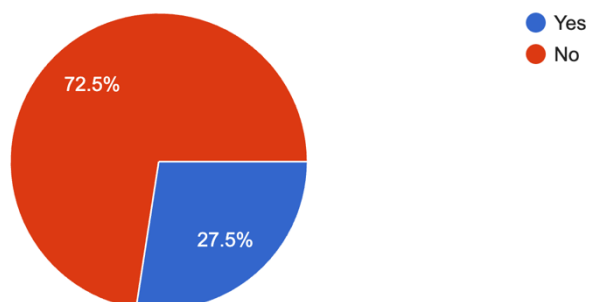
Age

51 responses



I have run my own business (I have been self-employed)

51 responses



(if you answered 'yes' to the previous question)

How long have you been self-employed?

13 responses

2,5 years

5 years

16 years

4 years

3 y

Less than 1 year

2 year

6-7 years

few months

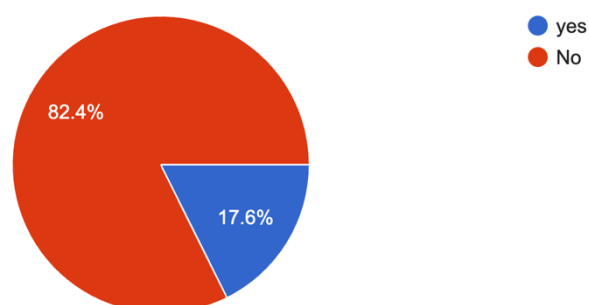
10 years

40 years

Yes. I have been self-employed for about three years.

I employ staff

51 responses



(if you answered 'yes' to the previous question)

How many employees do you have?

8 responses

15

40

15

3-4

10

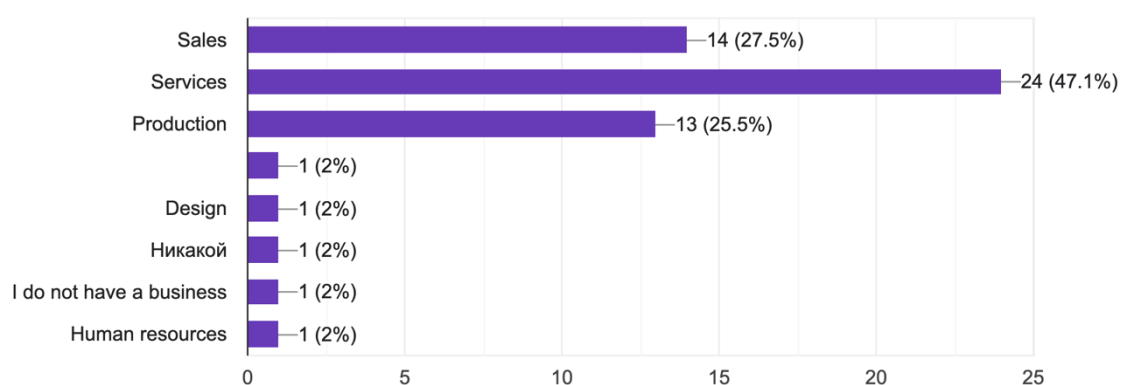
20 employees

30 employees

I have seven employees.

What is the profile of your business?

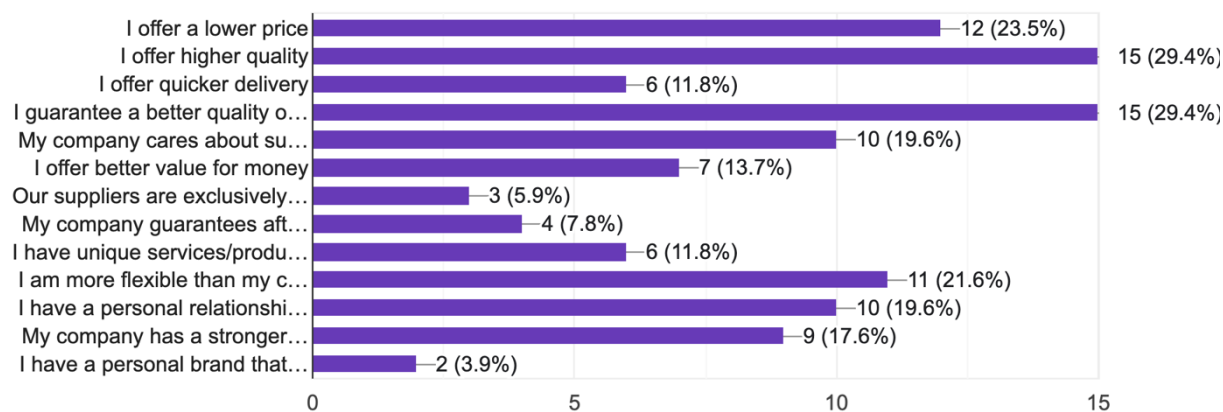
51 responses



B. BUSINESS DATA

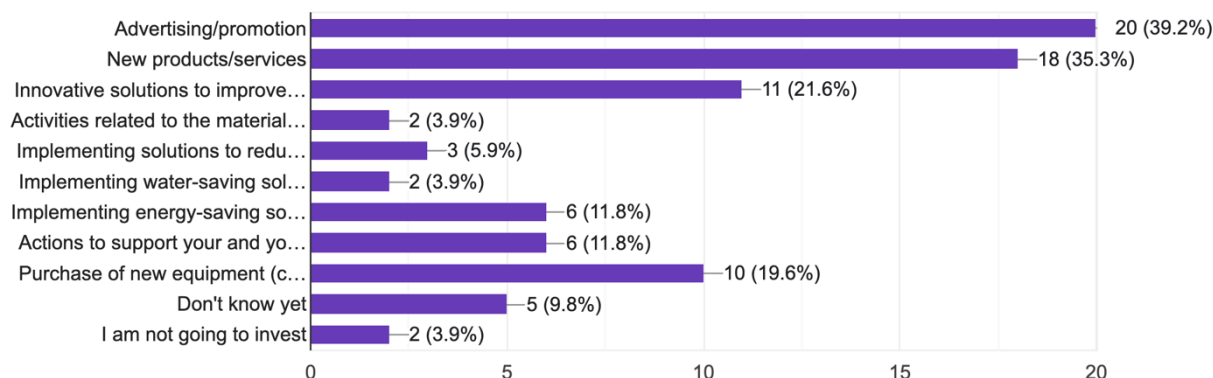
What is your competitive advantage? Why do your clients buy from you and not your competitors?

51 responses



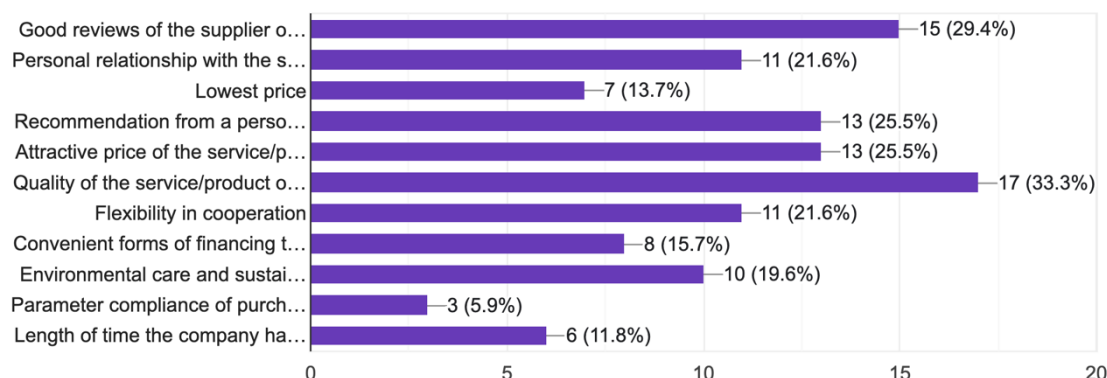
When planning your business activities, what do you intend to invest in over the next 6 months?

51 responses



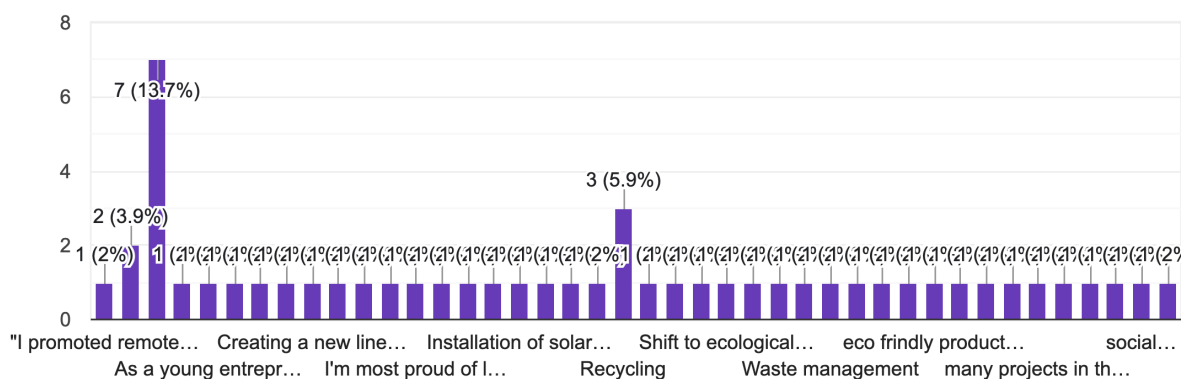
How do you select service/technology/solution/product suppliers for your business?

51 responses



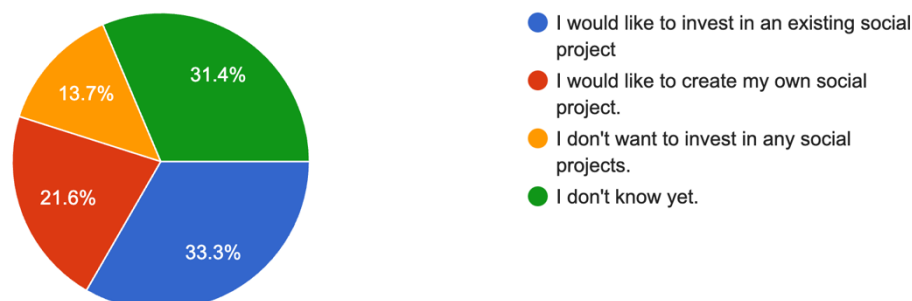
What pro-social or pro-environmental action undertaken by you so far are you most proud of?

51 responses



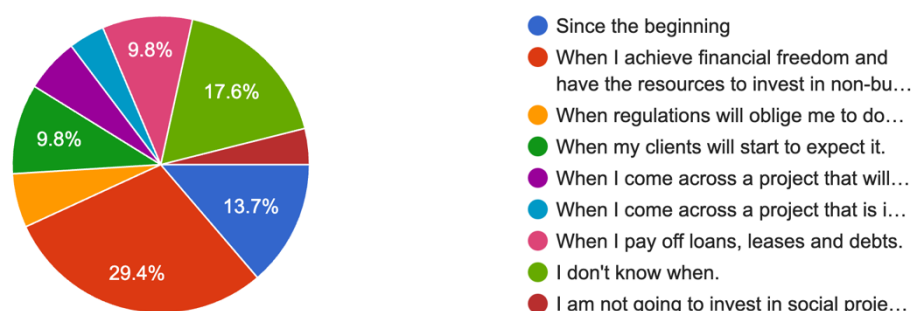
Would you like to invest in an existing social project? Or would you like to create your own social project to make your company's resources more efficient and useful?

51 responses



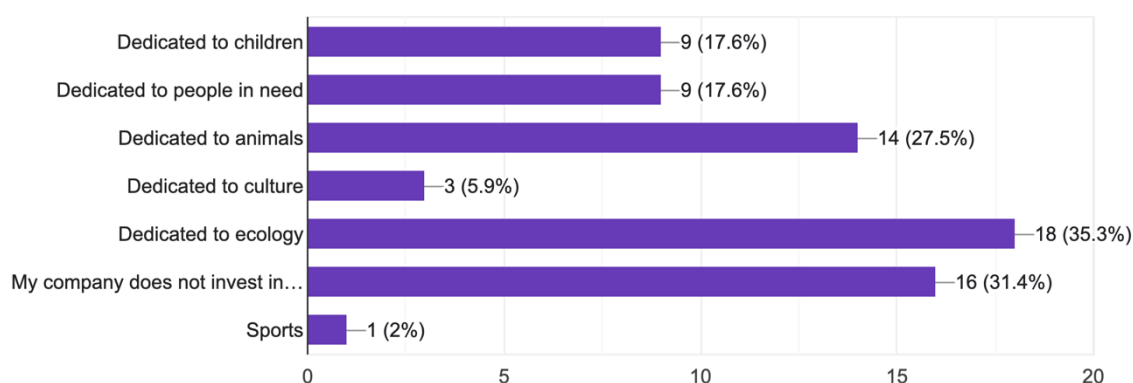
When after establishing your business would you consider investing in social projects?

51 responses



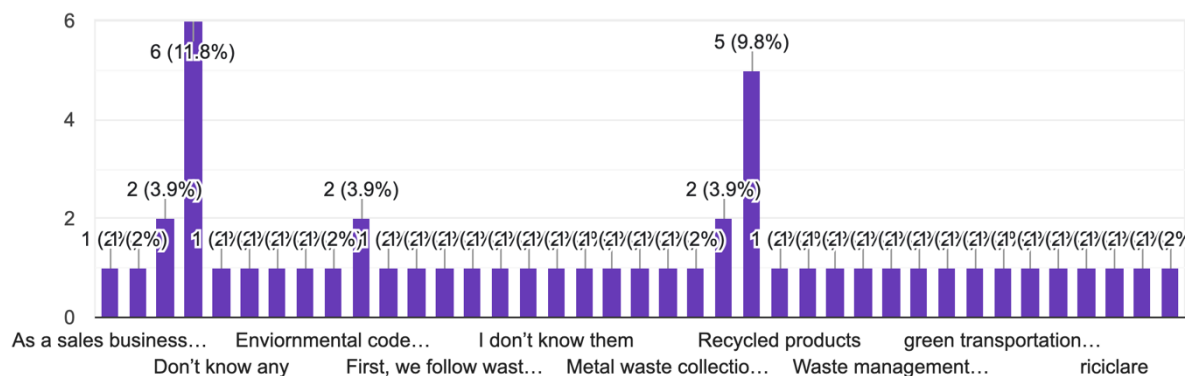
What kind of social projects is your company investing in or would like to invest in in the near future?

51 responses



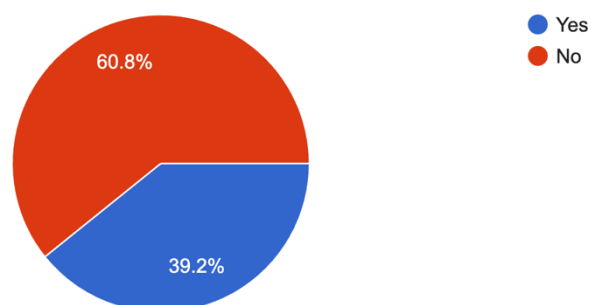
What environmental regulations do you know that apply to your business?

51 responses



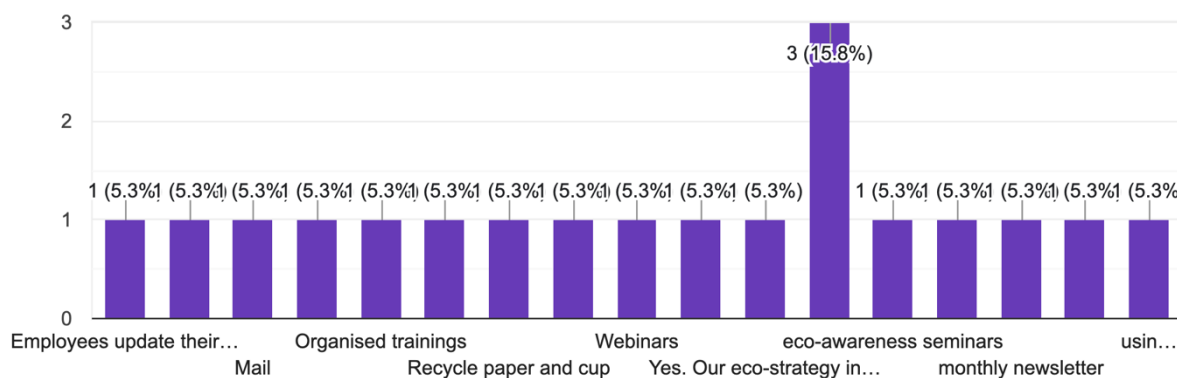
Do you have an eco-strategy at your company? Do you have regulations specifying how the company cares for the environment?

51 responses



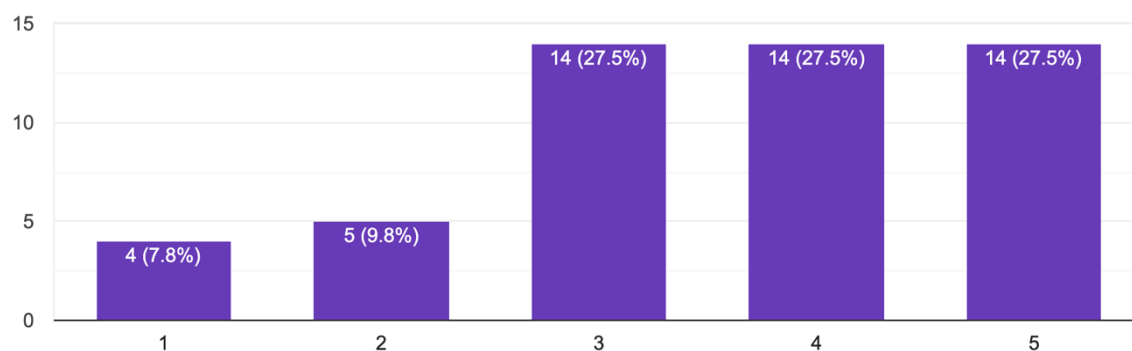
(if you answered 'yes' to the previous question) How do your employees update their knowledge of the strategy?

19 responses



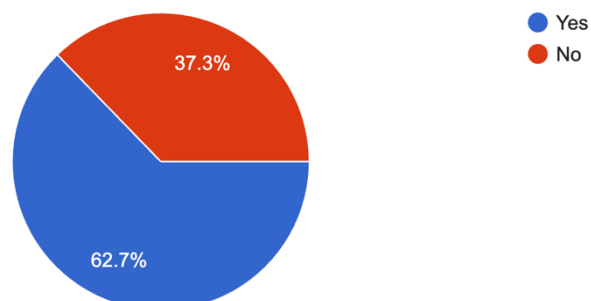
Determine on the scale below, to what extent you care about the positive impact on the environment in your company.

51 responses



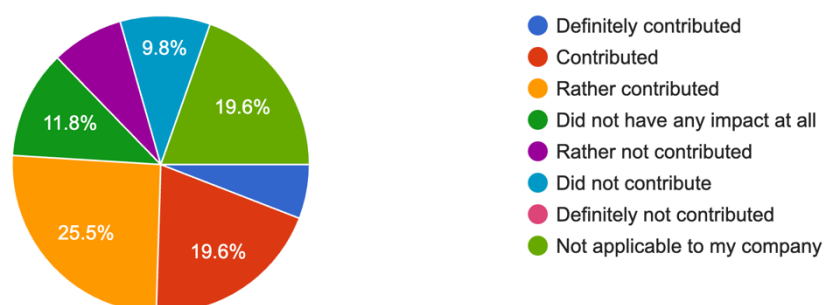
Does your company communicate to its customers that it operates in an environmentally friendly way?

51 responses



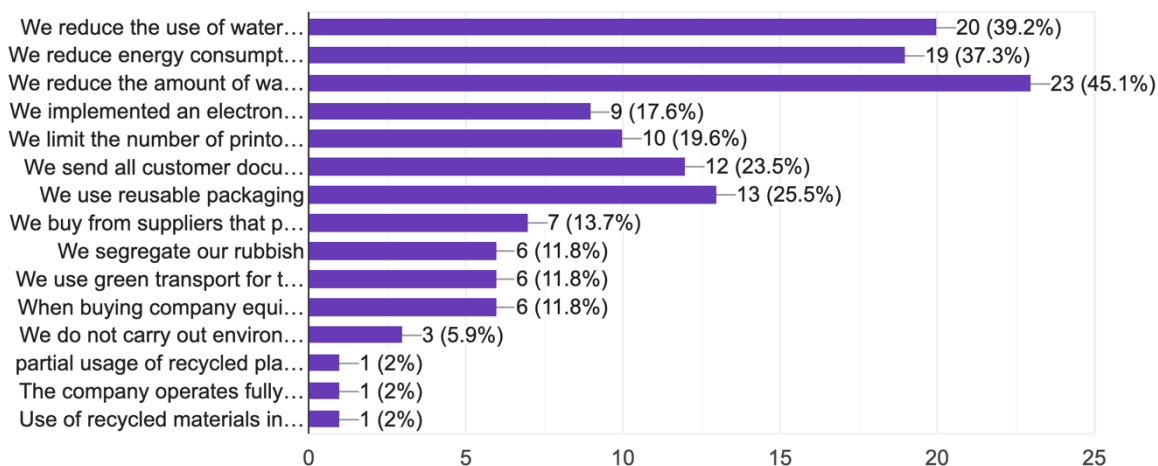
To what extent has the implementation of eco-friendly activities contributed to your company's profits?

51 responses



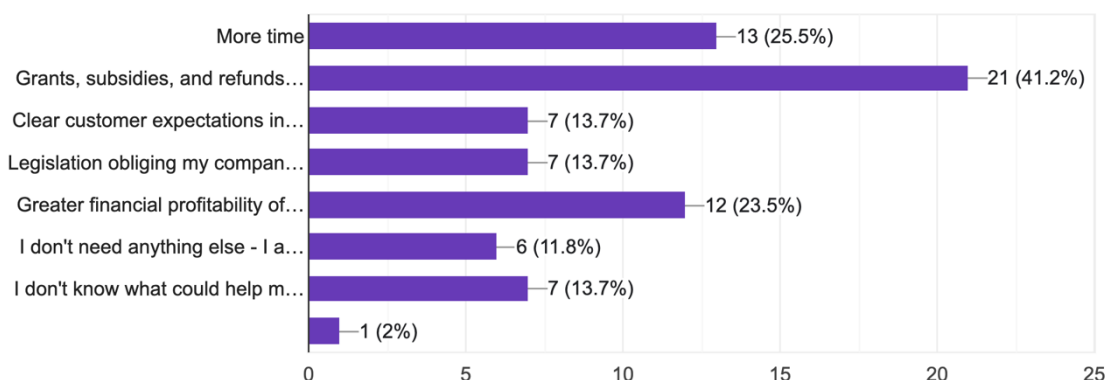
Select those environmentally friendly actions you take as a company.

51 responses



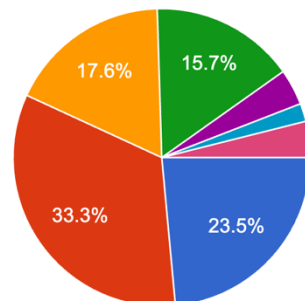
In order to implement additional eco-friendly actions, my company needs...

51 responses



To what extent do you think the environmental activities of entrepreneurs like you can make a real difference to the environment and reduce negative ...anet, over-consumption of natural resources, etc.?

51 responses

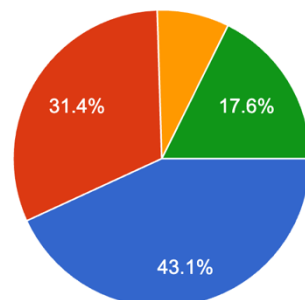


- Definitely, they can make a difference to the environment
- They can make a difference to the environment
- Rather, they can make a difference to the environment
- I have no opinion
- Rather, they cannot make a difference...
- They cannot improve the environment...
- Definitely, they cannot improve the en...

C. PERSONAL SHOPPING PREFERENCES

I do my grocery shopping (for my household)

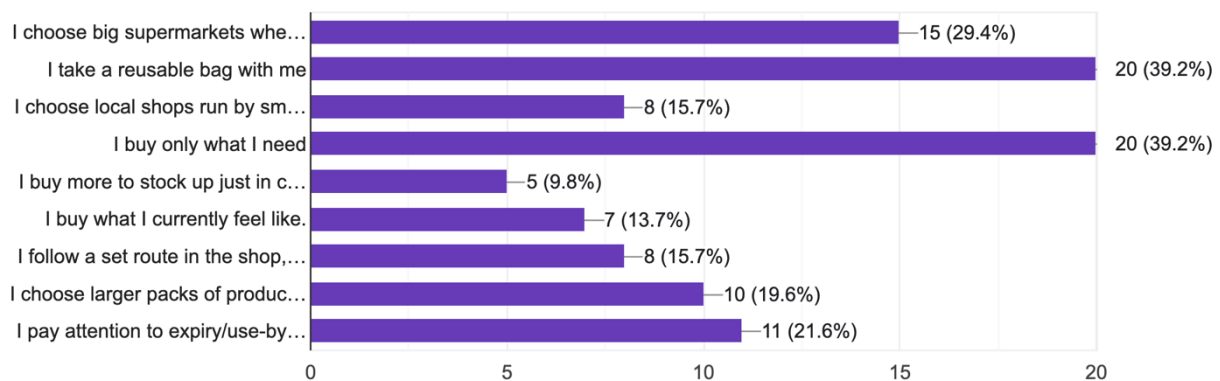
51 responses



- With a shopping list prepared in advance
- Spontaneously
- I ask others to do it
- I buy what I need regularly

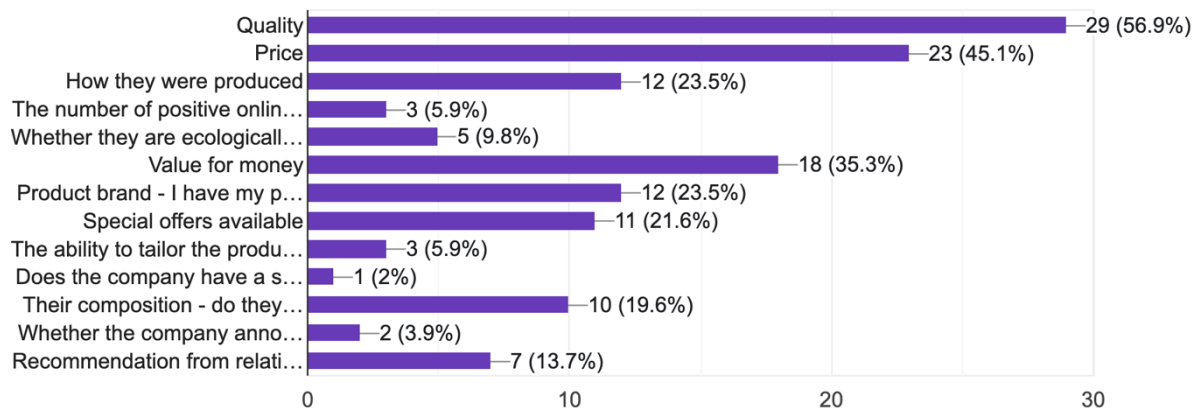
When going grocery shopping

51 responses



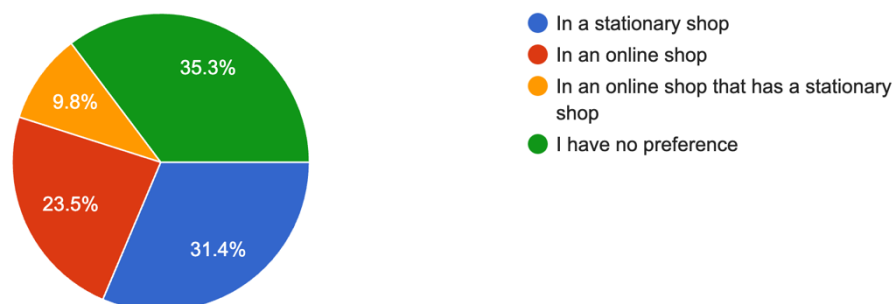
When choosing products, I pay attention to ...

51 responses



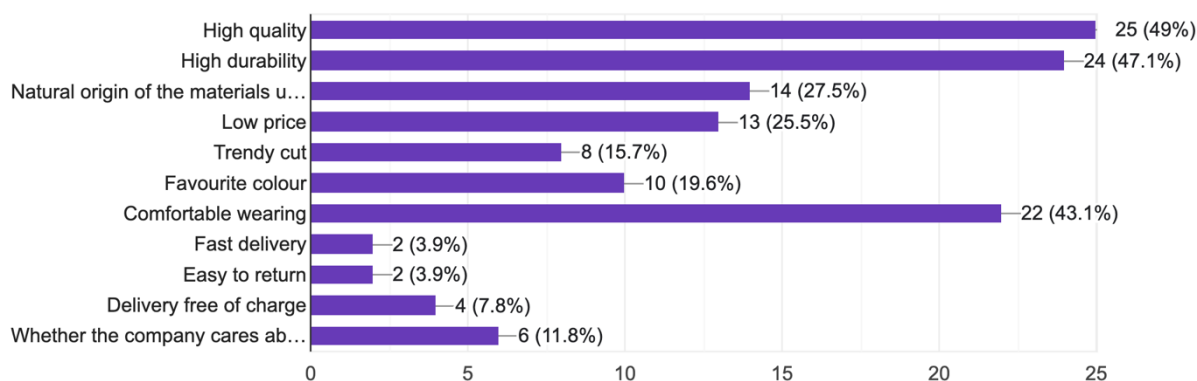
I usually buy everyday items, clothes, electronics, etc. (not including food)

51 responses



When deciding to buy clothes, I choose primarily by paying attention to:

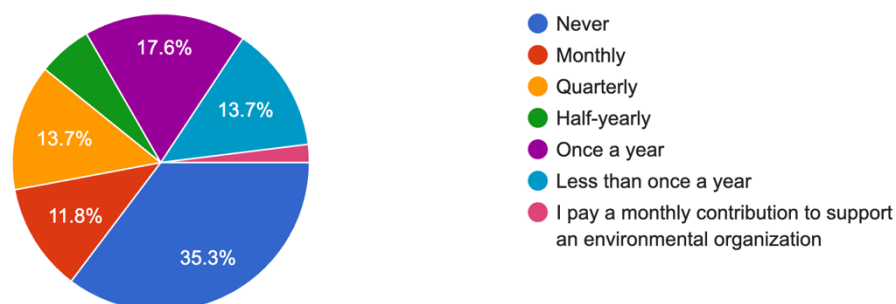
51 responses



D. CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR

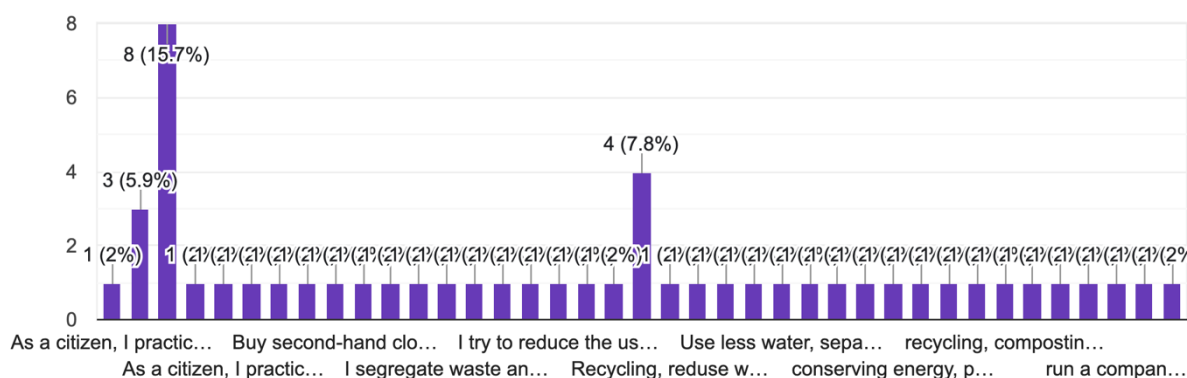
I invest my private funds in environmental activities. (For example: you financially support pro-ecological organisations, such as Green Peace ... remotely adopt animals of endangered species).

51 responses



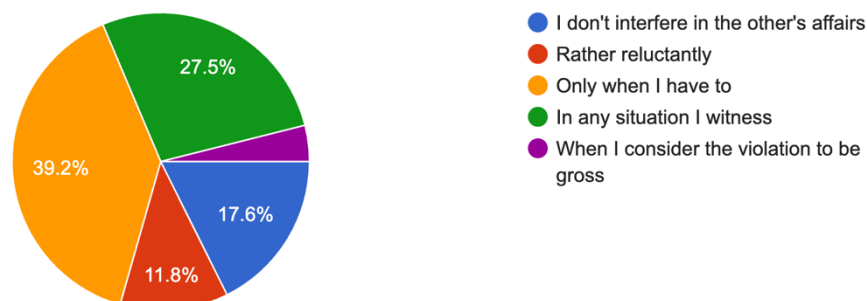
As a citizen, I take the following environmentally friendly actions:

51 responses



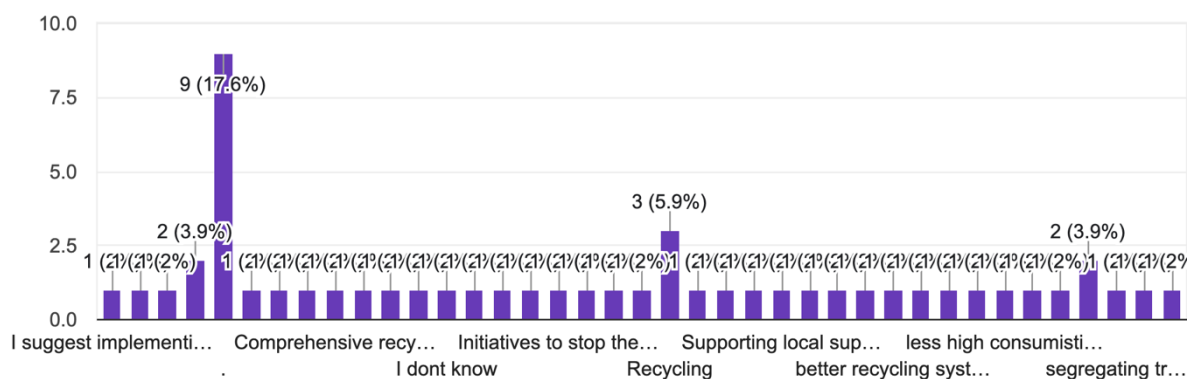
Do you point out to other people that they should take care of the environment with their behaviour?
(e.g. dispose of waste in appropriate containers, don't leave rubbish in the forest/park).

51 responses



What eco-friendly initiative can you suggest for implementation in your country?

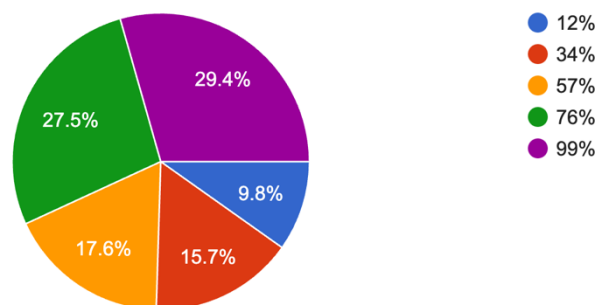
51 responses



E. KNOWLEDGE & LEARNING PREFERENCES

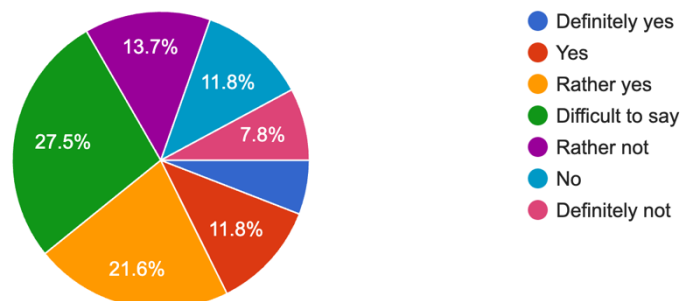
What percentage of all companies in Europe are SMEs?

51 responses



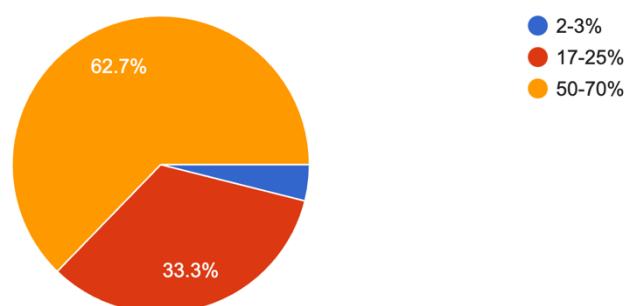
Do you think your company has a negative impact on the environment?

51 responses



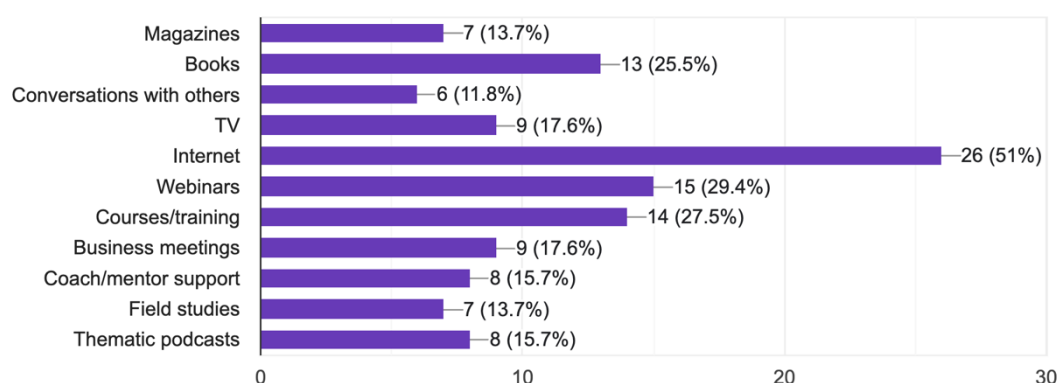
What percentage of industrial pollution in Europe are SMEs responsible for?

51 responses



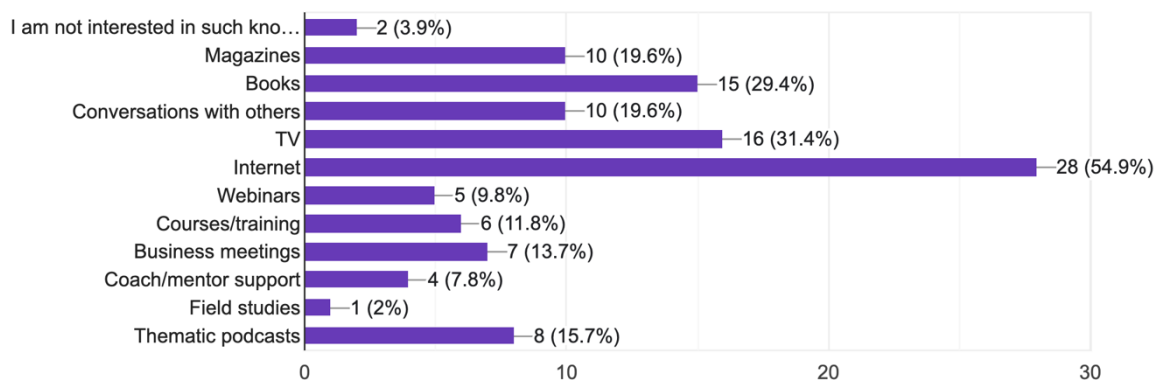
What is the main source from which you draw your knowledge about running a business?

51 responses



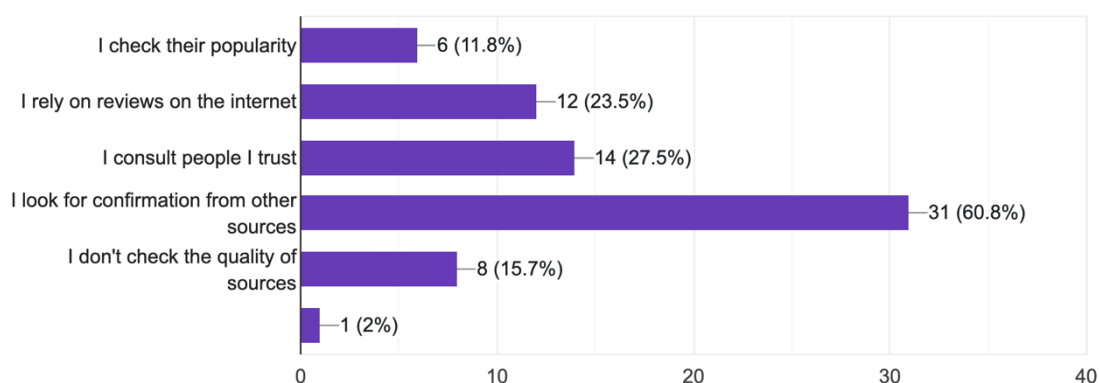
From which sources do you draw your knowledge of the factors affecting environmental pollution?

51 responses



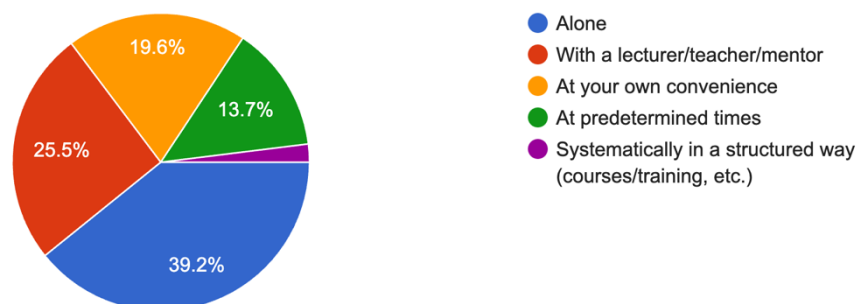
How do you verify the quality of the sources from which you draw your knowledge?*

51 responses



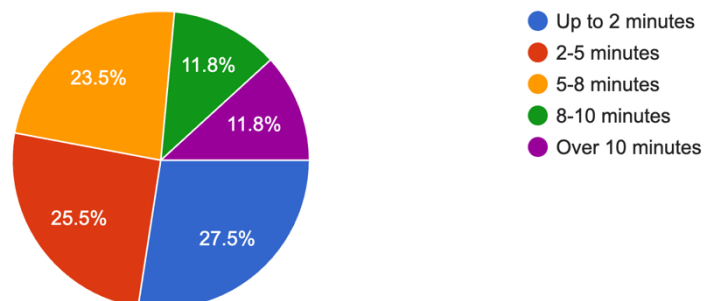
How do you most enjoy learning?

51 responses



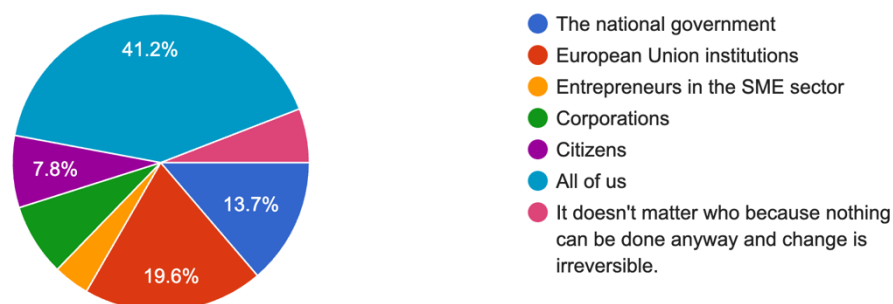
How long should the most convenient learning videos last?

51 responses



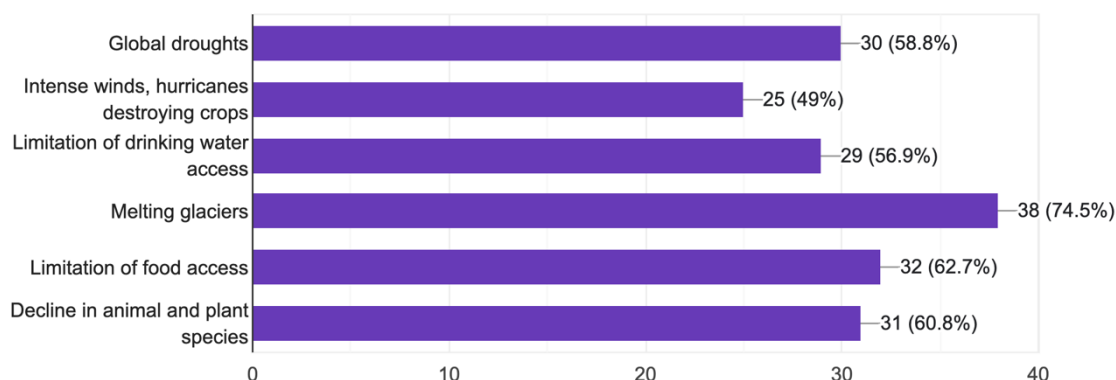
Who do you think should be primarily responsible for environmental action?

51 responses



What kind of risks can be caused to the environment by negligence of environmental measures?

51 responses



Thank you for your participation and your time! Is it okay if we contact you about this project to inform you of free training sessions on eco-entrepreneurship? If so, please provide your e-mail address below.

14 answers

For data protection and confidentiality reasons the email address does not appear in the results.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey of young entrepreneurs provides insights into the environmental attitudes, behaviors, and values that define eco-entrepreneurs in Italy.

1. Environmental Behavior Among Young Entrepreneurs

- **Eco-Strategy Awareness:** Around 60% of respondents have an eco-strategy, incorporating environmental considerations into business activities, with methods like recycling, energy reduction, and waste minimization.
- **Primary Actions:** Actions include reducing plastic use, utilizing recycled materials, choosing sustainable suppliers, and promoting eco-conscious customer interactions.
- **Impact of Eco-Friendly Activities:** Approximately 50% perceive that eco-friendly actions positively influence profitability, though a sizable group feels that the effects are minimal or hard to measure.

2. Motivations and Challenges

- **Investing in Green Initiatives:** Many entrepreneurs prioritize long-term value and corporate responsibility. Challenges include financial constraints and market-driven pressures, leading 41% to seek grants or subsidies to facilitate sustainable transformations.
- **Future Investments:** The majority plan to invest in innovative solutions and eco-friendly technologies, emphasizing new products and services over direct environmental projects.

3. Ideal Eco-Entrepreneur Traits

- **Values and Competitiveness:** The ideal eco-entrepreneur combines values like sustainability and quality with business-savvy practices such as competitive pricing, flexibility, and high-quality service.

- **Customer-Centric Approaches:** There is an emphasis on nurturing personal relationships with customers, maintaining a brand image associated with environmental responsibility, and establishing trust.
- **Education and Awareness:** The ideal eco-entrepreneur demonstrates awareness of environmental regulations, educates employees about sustainability practices, and encourages eco-conscious behaviors in daily operations.

4. Citizen and Consumer Attitudes

- **Pro-Social Actions:** Respondents are personally committed to eco-friendly actions, such as waste segregation, recycling, and responsible purchasing.
- **Market Influence:** Many young entrepreneurs recognize the growing consumer demand for eco-friendly products and view their companies as part of a broader movement toward environmental consciousness.

This survey highlights a trend of young Italian entrepreneurs viewing eco-entrepreneurship not only as a market advantage but as a moral obligation, albeit with challenges in balancing environmental goals and business viability. The ideal eco-entrepreneur is a proactive, values-driven individual who prioritizes both environmental impact and customer relations in their business model.



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